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CLAIMS

I Claim

Claim 1. (Currently Amended) A method to generate a compact item descriptor, a machine readable character string, derived by classifying the item and assigning values to a list of parameters to describe the characteristics of the item such that two different items with the that generate the same compact item descriptor are interchangeable, the method comprising the steps:

defining a first item;

defining a second item;

defining a classification tree which classifies a set of items including the first item and second item such that the first item and second item classify to the same leaf node with the same parameter values if and only if the items are interchangeable;

generating a commodity code for each branch and leaf of the classification tree starting with the commodity code for the root and appending as a suffix a unique character or unique sub-string of characters that represent a branch or leaf node at each fork such that the resulting character string uniquely identifies the sequence of branches and leaf node selected for the classification of an item represented by the leaf node;

defining a set of parameters for each leaf node that complete the description of an item classified at the leaf node and encode the possible value for each parameter as a character or string of characters such that the parameter values for an item classified at the leaf node are represented as a character string;

defining the compact item descriptor for an item as the commodity code for the item concatenated with the encoded parameter values for the item;

such that the first item and second item are interchangeable if and only if the compact item descriptor for the first item is the same as the compact item descriptor for the second item.

Claim 2. (Currently Amended) The compact item descriptor of claim 1 and a materials planning system and/or Approved Manufacturing list provide an item part number and item description field for the first item wherein the compact item descriptor for the first item is stored in the item description field of the materials planning system and/or the Approved Manufacturer List such that the item description field is queried using the compact item descriptor of the first item to return item part number as the response to the query.

Claim 3. (Currently Amended) The compact item descriptor of claim 1 and a catalog wherein the first item and second item are interchangeable and thus, the compact item descriptor for the first item is the same as the compact item descriptor for the second item; and the catalog provides an entry for the first item comprising an item description field containing the compact item descriptor for the first item, supplier name, and supplier part number such that the catalog item description fields is-are queried with the compact item descriptor of-for anthe second item and a-supplier name-and the catalog responds with the supplier name and supplier part number for an-interchangeablethe first item.

Claim 4. (Currently Amended) The compact item descriptor of claim 1 and a catalog wherein the catalog provides an entry for the first item comprising an item description field containing the compact item descriptor for the first item, the supplier name, and the supplier part number such that the catalog is queried with a-the supplier name and the supplier part number eoffor an-the first item and the catalog responds with the compact item descriptor of-for the first item.

Claim 5. (Currently Amended) The compact item descriptor of claim 1, a materials planning system and/or the Approved Manufacturer List , and a catalog wherein the materials planning system and/or the Approved Manufacturer List provides a part number for the first item and an item description field; and the catalog provides an entry for the first item comprising the supplier name, the supplier part number, and compact item descriptor for the first item where the catalog is queried with a-the supplier name and the supplier part number of an-the first item, the catalog responds with the compact item descriptor of the first item, and the compact item descriptor for the first item is stored in the item-masteritem description field of the materials planning system and/or the Approved Manufacturer List for the item such that the materials planning system and/or the Approved Manufacturer List relates the part number of the first item with the compact item descriptor for the first item as the item description.

Claim 6. (Currently Amended) The compact item descriptor of claim 1 where the first item and second item are interchangeable and thus, the compact item descriptor for the first item is the same as the compact item descriptor for the second item; and an Approved Manufacturer List, AML, catalog-wherein the catalog-providing a part number, an item description field containing the compact item descriptor for the first item, a supplier name, and a supplier part number wherein the AML is queried with the compact item descriptor of

~~an the second item and the catalog-AML responds with the supplier name and the supplier part number for an interchangeable item, the first item.~~

Claim 7. (Currently Amended) The compact item descriptor of claim 1, where the first item and second item are interchangeable and thus, the compact item descriptor for the first item is the same as the compact item descriptor for the second item; and an Approved Manufacturer List, AML, providing a part number, an item description field containing the compact item descriptor for the first item, the supplier name and the supplier part number for the first item and a catalog wherein the catalog providing an item description field containing the compact item descriptor of the second item, the supplier name and supplier part number for the second item wherein the catalog description fields are is queried with the compact item descriptor of for an the first item and a supplier name and the catalog responds with the supplier name and supplier part number for an interchangeable item, the second item; and the supplier name and supplier part number for the second item is are stored as an interchangeable into supplier name and the supplier part number field of in the materials planning system and/or the Approved Manufacturer List AML for the part number item.

Claim 8. (Currently Amended) The compact item descriptor of claim 1, where the first item and second item are interchangeable and thus, the compact item descriptor for the first item is the same as the compact item descriptor for the second item; and a catalog providing an item description field containing the compact item descriptor for the first item, a supplier name, and a supplier part number wherein the catalog item descriptor fields are queried with the compact item descriptor for the second item and the supplier name is translated to a catalog query and the catalog responds with the supplier name and supplier part number for an interchangeable item, the first item from the specified supplier.

Claim 9. (Canceled)

Claim 10. (Currently Amended) The compact item descriptor of claim 1 and a catalog wherein the catalog providing for the first item, a supplier name, supplier part number, and an item description field containing the first compact item descriptor and the catalog item description fields are is queried with the a compact item descriptor including a Standard Query Language, SQL, wild card character to partially specify a compact item descriptor where the first compact item descriptor matches the partially specified compact item

descriptor and the catalog responds with the supplier name and supplier part number of an interchangeable the first item.

Claim 11. (Currently Amended) The compact item descriptor of claim 1 and a catalog wherein providing a description field containing the compact descriptor of the first item, a supplier name, and a core supplier part number wherein the catalog description fields are is queried with the compact item descriptor of an for the first item and supplier name and the catalog responds with the core supplier part number for an interchangeable the first item and a supplier suffix table is queried with the supplier name and a manufacturing process requirement, including carrier, and the supplier suffix table responds with the modification to the core supplier part number such that the resulting supplier part number corresponds to a an interchangeable first item that meets the manufacturing process requirement.

Claim 12. (Currently Amended) A method for generating compact item descriptor, a machine readable character string, describing an item such that two different items with generating the same compact item descriptor are interchangeable, the method comprising the steps:

define a first item;

define a second item;

define a classification tree for a set of items including the first item and second item such that the first item and second item classify to the same leaf node with the same parameter values if and only if the items are interchangeable;

define a commodity code, a character string, for each leaf node that uniquely identifies the leaf node;

define a set of parameters for each leaf node that complete the description of an item classified at the leaf node and encode the value for each parameter as a character or string of characters such that the parameter values for an item classified at the leaf node are represented as a character string;

defining the compact item descriptor for an item as the commodity code for the item concatenated with the encoded parameter values for the item;

such that the first item and second item are interchangeable if and only if the compact item descriptor for the first item is the same as the compact item descriptor for the second item.

Claim 13. (Currently Amended) The compact item descriptor of claim 12 and a materials system and/or Approved Manufacturing List, AML, providing an item description field containing the compact descriptor of the first item and a part number wherein the item description field of the materials system and/or AML is queried with the compact item descriptor for the first item is stored in the item description field of and the a materials system and/or AML responds with the part number.

Claim 14. (Currently Amended) The compact item descriptor of claim 12 and a catalog, where the first item and second item are interchangeable and thus, the compact item descriptor for the first item is the same as the compact descriptor for the second item; and the catalog provides an item description field containing the compact descriptor of the first item, a supplier name, and supplier part number wherein the catalog item description fields are is queried with the compact item descriptor for the second item and supplier name and the catalog responds with the supplier part number of an interchangeable item, the first item, from the specified supplier.

Claim 15. (Currently Amended) The compact item descriptor of claim 12 and a catalog providing an item description field containing the compact descriptor of the first item, a supplier name, and supplier part number wherein the catalog item description fields are is queried with the compact item descriptor for the first item and the catalog responds with the supplier name and the supplier part number of an interchangeable the first item.

Claim 16. (Currently Amended) The compact item descriptor of claim 12 and a catalog providing an item description field containing the compact descriptor of the first item, a supplier name, and a core supplier part number wherein the catalog item description fields are is queried with the compact item descriptor of an for the first item and supplier name and the catalog responds with the core supplier part number for an interchangeable the first item and a supplier suffix table is queried with the supplier name and a manufacturing process requirement, including carrier, and the supplier suffix table responds with the modification to the core supplier part number such that the resulting supplier part number corresponds to an interchangeable for the first item that meets the manufacturing process requirement.

Claim 17. (Currently Amended) The compact item descriptor of claim 12 and a catalog providing for the first item, a supplier name, supplier part number, and an item description field containing the first compact item descriptor and wherein the catalog item description

fields areis queried with the a compact item descriptor that includes a Standard Query Language, SQL, wiild card character to partially specify a compact item descriptor where the compact descriptor of the first item matches the partially specified compact item descriptor and the catalog responds with the supplier name and supplier part number of an interchangeablethe first item.

Claim 18. (Canceled)

Claim 19. (Canceled)

Claim 20. (Canceled)

Claim 21. (New) A catalog system providing a compact item descriptor, a machine readable character string, wherein two different items are interchangeable if and only if their compact item descriptors are equal, comprising:

a catalog means providing for an item an item description field containing the compact descriptor for the item, a supplier name and a supplier part number for the item;

a first query means providing a query of the catalog item description fields with a compact item descriptor and the catalog returns the supplier name and the supplier part number for those items where the description field matches the compact item descriptor;

a classification tree means providing classifications for a set of items including a first item and a second item such that the first item and second item classify to the same leaf node with the same parameter values if and only if the items are interchangeable;

a commodity code means providing a unique character string for each leaf node of the classification tree that identifies the leaf node;

an encoded parameter value means providing for each leaf node a set of parameters that complete the description of an item classified at the leaf node and encode the value for each parameter as a character or string of characters such that the parameter values for an item classified at the leaf node are represented as a character string;

a compact item descriptor means providing for an item, classification of the item using the classification tree means and a compact descriptor for the item

comprising the commodity code for the leaf node for the classified item concatenated with the encoded parameter values for the item;

such that:

a first item and second item are interchangeable;

the first item is provided a first compact item descriptor from the compact descriptor means;

the second item is provided a second compact item descriptor from the compact descriptor means that, since the items are interchangeable, is the same as that for the first item;

the catalog means provides for the first item: an item description field containing the first compact descriptor, the supplier name for the first item, and the supplier part number for the first item;

wherein the catalog item description fields are queried with the second compact item descriptor and the catalog returns the supplier name and the supplier part number for an interchangeable item, the first item.

Claim 22. (New) The catalog and compact item descriptor of claim 21, wherein the catalog item description fields are queried with a compact item descriptor that includes a Standard Query Language, SQL, wild card character to partially specify a compact item descriptor where the compact descriptor of the first item matches the partially specified compact item descriptor and the catalog responds with the supplier name and supplier part number of the first item.

Claim 23. (New) The catalog and compact item descriptor of claim 21, further provides:

a supplier suffix means when queried with the supplier name and a manufacturing process requirement, including carrier, the supplier suffix means responds with the modification to the core supplier part number such that the resulting supplier part number for the first item meets the manufacturing process requirement;

the catalog means further provides an item description field containing the compact descriptor of the first item, a supplier name, and a core supplier part number;

such that the catalog item description fields are queried with the compact item descriptor for the first item and supplier name and the catalog responds with the core supplier part number for the first item and the supplier suffix means is queried with the supplier name and manufacturing process requirement and the modification to the core supplier part

number results in a supplier part number for the first item that meets the manufacturing process requirement.

Claim 24. (New) The catalog and compact item descriptor of claim 21, wherein the catalog further provides a second query means providing a query of the catalog item description fields with a compact item descriptor and a supplier name and the catalog returns the supplier part number for those items where the description field matches the compact item descriptor such that the catalog is queried with the compact item descriptor for the second item and the supplier name for the first item and the catalog responds with the supplier part number for an interchangeable item, the first item, provided by the supplier.